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The Hongkong Dispensary.

Established A.D. 1841.

Hongkong, 8th January, 1894.

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All letters for publication should be written on one side of the paper.

No anonymous or signed communications that have appeared in other papers shall be inserted.

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Telegraphic Address Press.

P. O. Box 20. Telephone No. 12.

The Daily Press.

HONGKONG, JANUARY 11th, 1894.

The present policy of Russia seems to be the creation of a war scare in many various parts, or at least to cause a general feeling of insecurity and unrest. She threatens Germany by the concentration of at least three-fourths of her troops on her frontiers; she has sent a squadron into the Mediterranean and is seeking a coaling station in that sea; she is reported to have designs on the mouth of the Danube; she is believed to be intriguing against Italy in Abyssinia; and in Central Asia is making claims in the Pamirs in order to disquiet India and China. Her recently concluded alliance with France, which is now an undoubted fact, has unquestionably given confidence to both Powers, and seems likely to hurry them on, one into a war of conquest, and the other into the long cherished conflict of revenge. Whether the new activity of Russia in so many points at once be part of a settled programme or is merely designed to distract attention from her real designs remains to be proved. There are many thoughtful observers of events who believe, with General Sir Archibald Alison, that the most certain indication of Russian intentions is to be found in the disposition of her troops. That eminent military authority, in an interesting article in the December issue of *Blackwood's*, expresses his conviction that for the present Russia has deferred her designs on Constantinople. Deferred, not blocked, they say. But the Triple Alliance blocks the way to the accomplishment of this supreme object of her ambition. *Impediment*, therefore, the Triple Alliance must be crushed, and this is to be done by the aid of France. General Alison, in proof of this belief, cites the fact that whereas Russia has only 80,000 troops confronting Turkey in Europe, 50,000 massed on the borders of Asia Minor, some 50,000 in Central Asia in the Gafgarn and Chinese frontiers, and 12,000 in Garrison at Vladivostok, she has no less than 754,000 collected close to the German border, and thus seriously threatens the Baltic provinces of Germany. This disposition of her armies is rendered the more significant because Russia has few lines of strategic railway, and cannot make a different disposition rapidly like other continental Powers. It may be said, and with much truth, that Russia has no immediate quarrel with either Germany, Austria, or Italy, but when a war of aggression has once been decided upon a sufficient pretext is never very difficult to discover. It may be possible that the Czar is still opposed to any disturbance of the armed peace which has so long subsisted, but we have to look at probabilities, and not to trust to the supposed personal predilections even of the emperors and empresses.

ALEXANDER III. And here is the case in a nutshell as it seems to us: Ever since what ZOLA has so rightly termed *Le Décalogue*, France has been striving, with an earnestness which has never flagged, to place herself in a position to reverse the disasters that overtook her in 1870 and recover the lost provinces of Alsace and Lorraine. Her efforts have, of course, not gone unobserved by Germany, and a race in armaments has been the outcome. The result up to the present is in favour of France. She has gone on increasing her army until now, when, at a war footing, it numbers 2,715,576 men of all arms with 4,500 guns, while Germany can only count 2,441,436 men and 4,428 guns. France is also much richer in horses than Germany, and on the whole feels herself at length better prepared than her great rival for *la revanche*. She has done this by a supreme effort, and has strained her resources in men to the utmost, but for the moment, France has the numerical advantage. The question is, does she intend to utilise it before her opponent again takes up the running and overhauls her?

The alliance between France and Russia, it is becoming increasingly evident, has not been formed with pacific intentions, and it is useless to try and deceive ourselves with that idea. The frantic demonstrations of delight with which the French people received the Russian squadron recently signified something more than a mere welcome to a friendly Power; it was the expression of enthusiasm over the completion of a pact which signifies that in the coming struggle for supremacy France will not be friendless, and that the hour of the revenge is approaching. Meanwhile the tactics of both members of the Dual Alliance appear to be the same, namely, to distract attention from their more serious designs by aggressive movements in various parts. Thus France provoked a quarrel and brush with Spain, who has a little war on the West Coast of Africa, and is reported to meditate fresh aggression in Madagascar. Whether these little diversions in Asia and Africa are got up specially for the benefit of Great Britain it is impossible to say positively, but it is not improbable that such is the fact, and it would be quite consistent with Muscovite policy, which may guide that of France for the time being. The British Government is of course interested alike in French movements in Spain and in Russian intrigues in the Pamirs. Indeed, these moves on the great political chess board interest Great Britain more immediately than the designs of Russia on the Bosphorus, and whatever the motives by which they are actuated she cannot afford to disregard them. Late telegrams appear to indicate the existence of an understanding between Great Britain and China on the subject of Chinese and Russian interests in preserving the balance of power in Asia. Thus one telegram, dated London, the 20th December, states that Russia has formally demanded from China the surrender of all the latter country's real or fancied rights in the Marghar Valley, one of the few practicable gateways giving access to India. A later telegram announces that the negotiations between Russia and China make slow progress. China desires to retain the Marghar Valley and consents to a rectification of frontier, but objects to Russia using Chinese territory as an eventual route to India. Similarly, China, rather late in the day, took a share in the negotiations with reference to the settlement of the French dispute with Siam. The lethargic rulers of Peking needed rousing to a knowledge of the events transpiring on the borders of the Central Kingdom, but once their attention has been directed to the matter in which Chinese interests were menaced by the aggressive policy of France and Russia, their mistrust is not easily allayed. China has suffered at the hands of both Powers, and though she has no special love for Great Britain she has more faith in the pacific nature of her government. The Chinese know enough of history to be aware that the pursuit of trade and not land-hunger has been the main factor in building up the British Empire, and they cannot overlook the circumstance that when Great Britain had the power to demand a large cession of territory from China she contented herself with a barren rock and the harbour of her north shores enclosed on which to centralise her trade and shipping in the Far East. Hence it comes to pass that China, holding all foreigners in fairly impartial hatred and contempt, is ready to join the least aggressive in any protest against the designs of her less scrupulous neighbours. As we have said before, it would be essentially unwise to place too much reliance upon China, both because of the corrupt dishonesty of her administration and the want of cordiality in her attitude to Great Britain. But if the Taught Union can be induced to place spokes in the wheels of the Franco-Russian coach, it may serve to avert a war later on into which China might be dragged.

Sir William and Lady Robinson have issued invitations for a ball at Government House on the 5th February.

Many and varied are the methods adopted to obstruct the public pathways. A shopkeeper at Prince Street was fined \$15 yesterday at the Police Court for weighing sugar in the road.

A somewhat expensive operation, which would take the gilt off the profit.

A Washoi left his shoes in the road outside his shop for the purpose of drying them. A coolie came along, placed them in his basket, and when he was asked to return them to the owner, he refused to do so, and was sentenced to ten days imprisonment yesterday by Commissioner W. C. H. Hastings.

The time honoured custom of wheelbarrow racing at passengers will probably never be abandoned. Four of the fraternity were fined \$3 each by Commissioner W. C. H. Hastings at the Police Court yesterday for this offence, and the bearers of a chair had to pay \$1 on a similar charge.

Madame Paton, wife of the new Japanese Minister to the United States, says, "I like American dress, all except the corset, but I find it extremely difficult to get accustomed to it. In Japanese attire it is easy to sit on the floor, and one cannot do so gracefully or comfortably in American clothing."

Yesterday's matinee at the Marionettes was under the patronage of Admiral Sir E. R. Fremantle and was largely attended. The programme had generally invited two hundred children from the French Consulate to be present, and the treat was thoroughly enjoyed by the little ones. To-morrow night's performance will be under the patronage of General Barker.

The *Empress of India* left Vancouver for Hongkong on Monday afternoon last.

The Northern Pacific steamer *Tacoma* arrived at Victoria, B.C., on the 8th inst. from Hongkong and Japan.

The Indo-China steamer *Chongay*, from Calcutta and Straits, left Singapore for this port on the 9th inst. at 6 p.m.

The *Catharine's Illustrated Magazine* for December is the first number of a new volume. It is full of useful and entertaining reading and well maintains the high standard of this popular periodical.

The "Old Volume" are to hold a meeting to-morrow at 9 p.m. at the Chambers, and the agenda states that the evening will be devoted to "Impromptu Speeches." As the opening of the debates and the subjects are to be drawn by the members, there will be plenty of amusement in the gathering.

A well-known figure amongst the local community passed away yesterday morning in the person of Mr. Cheung Kai-woi, who resided in Wyndham Street. Mr. Cheung Kai-woi was formerly employed by the Hongkong Club, from which position he retired some twelve or fourteen years ago with a competence. He was a large property owner and was attended by good fortune in most of his numerous speculations. He was married to a Chinese lady, and had a family of four children. He was a native of China, and the Straits, Limited, as its proprietor, and held the position at the time of his death. He had been ill for ten or twelve days, and on Tuesday night sent for Mr. F. W. Brown, solicitor, and made his will. He is reported to have left three lakhs.

LATEST TELEGRAMS.

(SUPPLIED TO THE "DAILY PRESS.")

LONDON, 8th January.

MASHONLAND.

Sir Henry Loch telegraphs that he has abandoned all hope of the safety of Captain Wilson and his party, who were supposed to have escaped in the direction of Harbelly Hill.

So soon as the weather permits an expedition will be sent to investigate.

THE UNITED STATES TARIFF BILL.

The Tariff Bill has been brought forward in the House of Representatives.

SERRA LEONE.

The French Press is agitating the question of England's position in Sierra Leone.

FROM JOURNAL PAPERS.

M. LE MYRE DE VILLES ON THE SIAM-CHINA QUESTION.

PARIS, 30th December.

M. Le Myre de Villes has arrived in France and has given to the press favourable accounts of the position in Indo-China. He expresses himself as satisfied with his voyage and confident of the execution of the treaty with Siam.

PARIS, 31st December.

The Assize Court at Angoulême has acquitted all the prisoners accused in connection with the Aigues-Mortes affair.

The verdict has caused excitement in Italy.

AMOY RACES.

THIRD DAY, Wednesday, 10th January.

FORMOSA CUP (presented); value \$250; 2nd prize \$100; 3rd prize \$50; 4th prize \$25; 5th prize \$10; 6th prize \$5; 7th prize \$2; 8th prize \$1; 9th prize \$0.50; 10th prize \$0.25.

When we consider that in 1877 the export of Amoy Tea amounted to upwards of 50,000 piculs, it will be seen what a serious change has come over this branch of our trade.

The Amoy tea trade has been a long one, and it is not likely to be a short one.

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THE DECLINE IN THE TEA TRADE OF FOCHOW AND AMOY.

Mr. H. Pringo, Commissioner of Customs at Fochow, in his annual report gives the following account of the tea trade.

In regard to the pursuits of the people, so far as can be gathered from the only information available, it is to be feared that, instead of material progress, there has been a steady decline in the tea trade, and consequently a corresponding decline in the prosperity of the people. It was 10 years ago that the tea trade, for instance, which ranked for many years as the most important in the province, has during the decade contained a steady decline. This is the more to be regretted as the cultivation of tea did not involve an unusual expenditure of labour, though it required, during the decade contained a steady decline. It is the more to be regretted as the cultivation of tea did not involve an unusual expenditure of labour, though it required, during the decade contained a steady decline.

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